

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires all Federal agencies to give appropriate consideration of potential environmental effects of proposed major actions in planning and decision-making. The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) is responsible for issuing regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500 et seq.) implementing the provisions of NEPA. CEQ regulations are in turn supplemented by procedures adopted on an agency-specific basis. For the Department of the Army (DA), the pertinent regulations are contained in Army Regulation (AR) 200-1 and 32 CFR 650, *Environmental Protection and Enhancement*, and AR-200-2 and 32 CFR 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions* (dated March 29, 2002). This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared pursuant to these laws and regulations.

Changes to established installation land use that generate impacts on the environment are included in AR 200-2's list of Army actions that typically require an EA [32 CFR 651.33(c)]. While required to assess environmental impacts and evaluate their significance, an EA is routinely used as a planning document to evaluate environmental impacts, develop alternatives and mitigation measures, and allow for agency and public participation (32 CFR 651.20).

The proposed action (Alternative I, the preferred alternative) and subject of this EA is to change the Area B Master Plan for Fort Detrick, Maryland. This change will alter the planned land use for Area B from an agricultural-dominated land use to primarily recreation through the construction and operation of the following six proposed projects on Area B at Fort Detrick, Maryland:

- 18-Hole Golf Course,
- Indoor Shooting Range,
- Paintball Fields,
- Recreational Vehicle (RV) Park,
- Relocation of seven antenna towers from Area A to Area B, and
- Area B Perimeter Fence.

Fort Detrick is considering the use of approximately 150 acres of Area B for these facilities. Additionally, the implementation of the six proposed projects would require the modification of the recently completed 2003 Installation Master Plan EA for U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Fort Detrick. Detailed descriptions of the six proposed projects are found in Section 2.0 of this EA.

This EA describes the potential environmental impacts associated with transforming Area B from agricultural-dominated land use to primarily recreational land use through the implementation of the proposed six projects. This analysis considers short and long-term environmental and human health impacts and cumulative impacts resulting from association with other activities in the area.

1.2 LOCATION OF THE INSTALLATION

Fort Detrick is situated in central Maryland approximately 45 miles west of Baltimore and 45 miles northwest of Washington, DC. Interstate 70 (I-70), Interstate 270 (I-270), and U.S. Route 15 are the three major routes that provide access to the installation (Figure 1-1). The installation is located in the northwest portion of the City of Frederick, Frederick County, Maryland. The City of Frederick, the largest city in Frederick County and the second largest city in population and land area in Maryland, serves as the county seat. The majority of the area surrounding Fort Detrick is urban. As the largest county in Maryland, Frederick County covers 665 square miles (USAG, Fort Detrick, 2003a).

The installation encompasses 1,143 acres divided into three separate parcels of land that are identified as Areas A, B, and C (Figure 1-2). Area B, the subject of this EA, contains 399 acres of land.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed action would help to sustain the missions and requirements for the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) program, the Fort Detrick Security, Plans, Operations, and Force Protection (SPO), the Provost Marshal Office (PMO) and the U.S. Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS). The following provides a description of the mission, responsibilities, and the association of the four programs with the proposed action.

In an effort to meet long-term mission and personnel requirements, the DA has developed a MWR program. This program, designated by AR 215-1, was designed to attract and retain an elite work force of active duty personnel. These personnel can be and are called upon at a moment's notice to deploy overseas to defend the country's interests. A key element in the MWR program is improving quality of life for military members and authorized patrons who work and reside at various Army installations. The program is designed to meet the needs of the installation community, which includes soldiers, units, retirees, civilian employees, and their families.

The mission of the Directorate of Community Services at Fort Detrick is "to provide programs and services that are diversified and innovative and focus on well-being to include health, safety, and morale, welfare and recreation, which directly support readiness." The following objectives have been established to support and adhere to the above mission:

- Support combat readiness and effectiveness;
- Support recruitment and retention of quality personnel;
- Provide a quality of living comparable to that which our soldiers and civilians are pledged;
- Promote and maintain the mental and physical fitness and well-being of personnel;
- Ease the transition of individuals into military life and the relocation of personnel and accommodate family members; and



FIGURE 1-1 – REGIONAL MAP

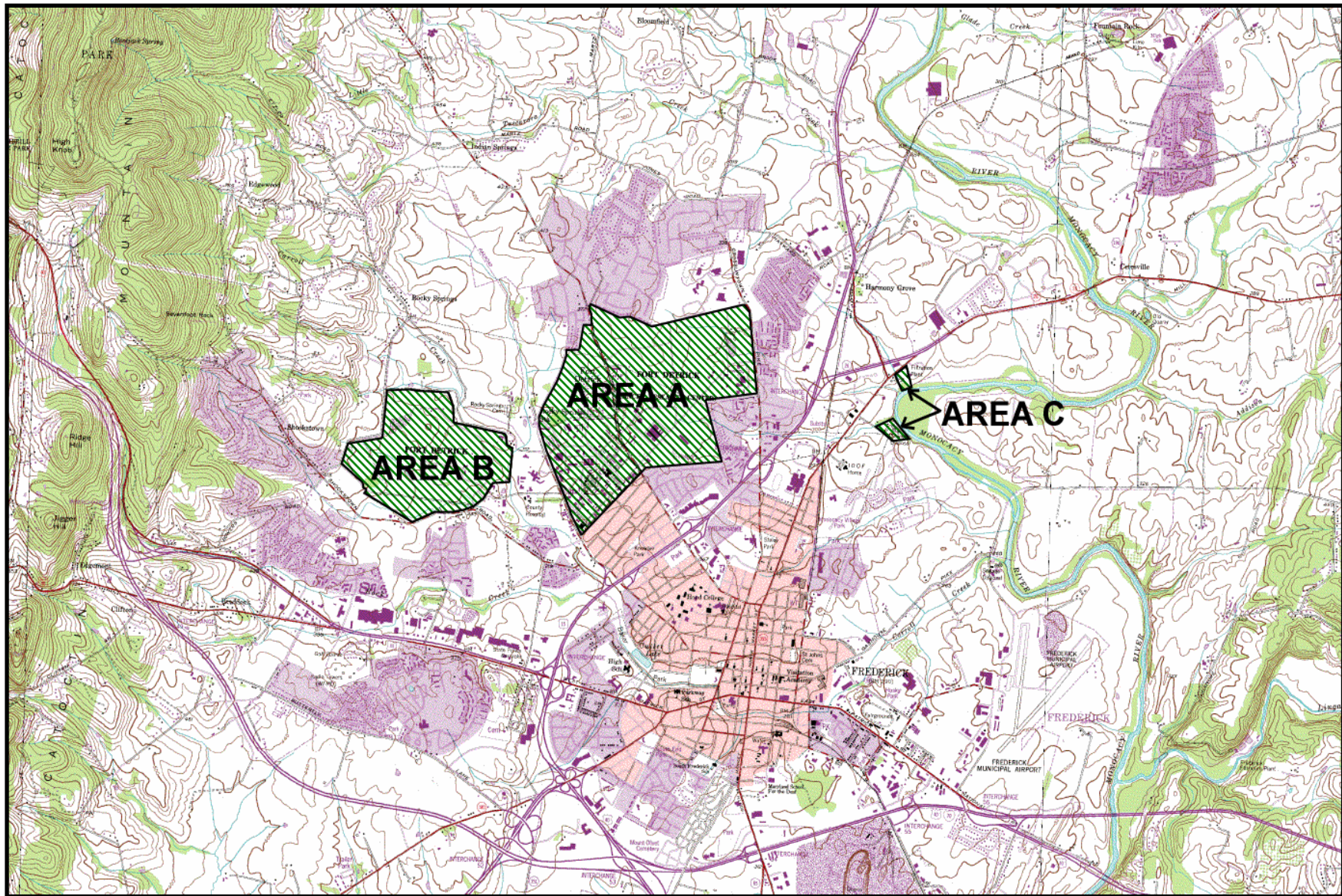


FIGURE 1-2 – MAP OF AREA A, AREA B, AND AREA C AT FORT DETRICK.

- Provide facilities and programs that meet the assessed needs of today's soldier, family and community.

In an effort to increase and improve community services at Fort Detrick, the four recreational facilities (i.e., 18-Hole Golf Course, Indoor Shooting Range, Paintball Fields and RV Park), are being proposed. None of the four types of recreational facilities being proposed currently exist at Fort Detrick.

In addition to the recreational mission of the Indoor Shooting Range, this facility will also support small-arms training and annual qualification for military personnel. The Indoor Shooting Range would be utilized by soldiers, police, and guards to practice marksmanship proficiency and complete annual small arms recertification requirements, as required under AR-190-14 – *Carrying of Firearms and Use of Force for Law Enforcement and Security Duties*. This regulation states, "Military police, DA civilian investigators, DA civilian police and security guards, and contracted or contractor security forces will qualify annually." The mission of the Fort Detrick PMO, which operates under SPO, is committed to providing the highest quality of police services by empowering its members and the community to work in partnership with the goal of improving the quality of life in Fort Detrick, while at the same time maintaining respect for individual rights and human dignity. In order to provide high quality police service, the Fort Detrick PMO personnel train and perform required annual qualifications at the City of Frederick's shooting range. This is an outdoor shooting range; therefore, use of the range is weather-dependent. During periods of inclement weather pistol training and qualification was completed at Fort Ritchie, located in Washington County, Maryland. Due to the closure of Fort Ritchie, this alternative shooting range is no longer an option. Additionally, military units at Fort Detrick are currently traveling to other local military installations (e.g., Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania) for training and annual small-arms recertification.

The MARS program operates nine antennas at Fort Detrick. Presently, seven antennas are located on Area A at Fort Detrick and two are located in Area B. These two are inoperable and will be repaired prior to activation. All seven antennas on Area A would be relocated to Area B. All antennas are maintained by the 21st U.S. Army Signal Brigade, a major subordinate organization of the U.S. Army Network Enterprise Technology Command (NETCOM), headquartered at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The MARS program consists of licensed amateur radio operators who are interested in military communications on a local, national, and international basis as an adjunct to normal communications. MARS is an official Department of Defense (DoD) and DA sponsored communications system. Therefore, it has official status, is assigned missions and functions, and authorizes the use of assigned military radio frequencies. The mission of MARS is divided into three objectives, which are:

- Provide the DoD-sponsored emergency communications on a local, national, and international basis as an adjunct to normal communications;
- Provide auxiliary communications for military, civil, and/or disaster officials during periods of emergency; and
- Assist in effecting normal communications under emergency conditions.

In addition to the above objectives, MARS provides a free radiogram public service, intended to boost the morale of soldiers, airmen, sailors, and other authorized users worldwide. This service

is available for messages going to or coming from U.S. Military, Department of State (DOS), and DoD personnel and their dependents. Also, radiograms can be sent to and from military units and other official DoD organizations.

In accordance with AR 190-11, *Physical Security of Arms, Ammunition, and Explosives*, 12 February 1998, and AR 525-13, *Antiterrorism*, 4 January 2002, installations are required to take measures to protect the installation's facilities and personnel. To meet this requirement, Fort Detrick is proposing to replace the existing four-foot farm fence that currently surrounds Area B with an eight-foot high chain-link fence with barbed wire above. In addition to improving the internal security for Area B, the proposed fencing will improve the safety for the surrounding communities and neighbors by restricting access to Area B and the operations of the proposed activities (recreational and antenna field) at Area B.

The *purpose* of the proposed action is to provide improved and increased community services in a quality Army community that is convenient to duty and work stations, to provide mission responsiveness, and to add to the soldiers' quality of life. For cost-effectiveness in providing general support (i.e., training facilities, off-duty recreation, and convenient transportation) and for maximizing the morale and service esprit that naturally results from Army personnel co-recreating, the purpose is also to utilize, to the extent practical, a location where proposed project support infrastructure and open space land at Fort Detrick already exists. The Indoor Shooting Range, in addition to being a recreation service, would provide a facility where the Fort Detrick Police Department and military personnel can train and perform their annual small arms recertification. The RV Park would fill a void in the network of military campgrounds and RV Parks by providing a campground in the region of western Maryland, northern West Virginia, and southern Pennsylvania. The movement of the antennas from Area A to Area B at Fort Detrick would create valuable open space that could be used to support future development on Area A at Fort Detrick. Additionally, these antennas are part of a large network of antennas located around the world that allow soldiers, airmen, sailors, and other authorized users worldwide to communicate for free with their dependents. The purpose of modifying the perimeter fence is to provide security enhancements to ensure adequate force protection, land security, and safety measures for Area B at Fort Detrick.

The *need* for the proposed action results from the mission and objectives established by four programs/offices at Fort Detrick: MWR, SPO, PMO, and MARS. The proposed recreational projects for Area B are of a type not currently provided at Fort Detrick; as a result, the installation community is currently going outside Fort Detrick to use privately owned golf courses, paintball fields, and indoor/outdoor shooting and skeet ranges, which incurs higher costs and requires transportation. Military personnel that are stationed at Fort Detrick for a short period of time do not have the knowledge of and in some instances the transportation to recreational facilities located outside of Fort Detrick. This inconvenience can adversely affect the morale and overall quality of life for these individuals. The Indoor Shooting Range will provide a multi-purpose range that will allow soldiers, police, and guards to practice marksmanship proficiency and complete annual small arms recertification requirements, as required under AR-190-14 – *Carrying of Firearms and Use of Force for Law Enforcement and Security Duties*. The range will also eliminate required travel to other indoor or outdoor shooting ranges within the northern Maryland and southern Pennsylvania regions and concerns regarding the use outdoor shooting ranges during inclement weather. The four closest RV Parks in the

Army network are located between 60 and 85 miles from Fort Detrick. These locations are too inconvenient for military personnel and other authorized users to utilize for current and proposed recreation activities at Fort Detrick, or to use to visit local area attractions. Relocation of the seven MARS antennas from Area A to Area B is necessary as a result of projects and land use changes identified in the *EA for the Installation Master Plan for Fort Detrick, Maryland*. The perimeter fence enhancements are needed to comply with AR 325-13, which states that “commanders will ensure that [antiterrorism] specific security procedural and physical measures are employed to protect personnel, information, and material resources from terrorist threats.”

1.4 ASSESSMENT APPROACH

To reduce redundancy with previous relevant documents, the CEQ (40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508), encourages the incorporation by reference of information and analysis from previous EAs. This EA is based, in part, on earlier NEPA documentation. The approach entails referencing specific analyses, discussions, and conclusions of the earlier documentation without providing detailed discussion in the present EA. Consistent with CEQ guidance and DA policy, the EA incorporates information from the following EAs: *Environmental Assessment, Installation Master Plan for Fort Detrick, Maryland* (USAG, Fort Detrick, 2003a); and the *Environmental Assessment, Construction and Operation of the Air Force Medical Evaluation Support Activity (AFMESA) Facilities on Area B at Fort Detrick, Maryland* (USAG, Fort Detrick, 2002). Other documents referenced in this EA include: *Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for Fort Detrick* (USAG, Fort Detrick, 2001); and the *Fort Detrick and Installation-Wide Transportation Study for Fort Detrick* (USAG, Fort Detrick, 2003b).

This EA provides the best available information, as of April 2004, including guidance provided by installation personnel on the proposed activities for Area B. Data presented in Section 4.0 has been updated to reflect the current conditions at Fort Detrick. Where conditions have not changed or updated studies have not been accomplished, reference is made to the most current source.

1.5 PUBLIC AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND REVIEW

Public and agency participation in the NEPA process promotes open communication between the public and government to enhance better decision-making. All persons and organizations having a potential interest in the proposed action, including residential communities adjacent to Area B, are urged to participate in the NEPA process.

Coordination with federal, state, and local agencies with jurisdiction by law or expertise will take place during the preparation of the EA. In addition, agency and public input will be obtained during a 30-day public comment period. The public comment period will be held following completion of the EA and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI). Notices of the public comment period and availability of the EA and Draft FNSI for review will be advertised through the local news media (Frederick News-Post and The STANDARD), the City of Frederick’s Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) Districts 1 and 5, the Post Library on Fort Detrick and the Frederick County Library at 110 East Patrick Street, Frederick, MD 21701. The EA will also be available for review on Fort Detrick’s website (<http://www.detrick.army.mil>). Additionally,

notices of availability for the EA and Draft FNSI will be sent directly to residents that are adjacent to Area B via U.S. Postal Service. A distribution list, located in Section 10, contains all persons and agencies that were sent either the EA and Draft FNSI or a notice of availability for document review. During the 30-day public comment period, any comments submitted by agencies, organizations, or members of the public on the proposed action or EA will be considered. If the EA concludes that there are not significant impacts, Fort Detrick will issue a final FNSI.